

Amendments to the Claims:

1 - 17. (canceled)

18. (new) A mail opener for use with a postage meter including a print head movable between an operative, printing position and an inoperative position in which printing of mail pieces cannot be effected, the mail opener comprising:

a cutting device movable between an operative position to open mail pieces and a retracted, inoperative position in which the cutting device is maintained out of engagement with mail pieces; and

drive means operable to displace the cutting device between the operative and inoperative positions, the drive means being operated by movement of the print head into the printing position to move the cutting device into the inoperative position.

19. (new) A mail opener as claimed in claim 18, wherein the postage meter includes a first mail piece feed guide, and the mail opener includes a second mail piece feed guide extending in alignment with the first mail piece feed guide, with the second mail piece feed guide being located to guide an edge of a mail piece into engagement with the cutting device when the cutting device is in the operative position and prevent engagement of mail pieces with the cutting device when the cutting device is in the inoperative position.

20. (new) A mail opener as claimed in claim 18, further comprising:
mechanical interlocking means operatively connected between the printing head and the cutting device.

21. (new) A mail opener as claimed in claim 20, wherein the cutting device is carried by a movable member, and the interlocking means comprises a cam which engages the movable member, with operation of the cam causing movement of the cutting device between the operative and inoperative positions.

22. (new) A mail opener as claimed in claim 18, wherein the cutting device is a rotatably-driven rotary blade.

23. (new) A mail opener as claimed in claim 18, further comprising:
driven feed means operative to draw mail pieces past the cutting device.

24. (new) A mail opener as claimed in claim 23, wherein the driven feed means comprises a driven feed roller and a pressure roller co-operating therewith.

25. (new) A mail opener as claimed in claim 23, further comprising:
speed adjustment means for adjusting the speed of the driven feed means.

26. (new) A mail opener as claimed in claim 18, wherein the drive means includes an electrical circuit responsive to movement of the print head to operate the drive means to locate the cutting device in the inoperative position in response to the print head being moved to the operative position.

27. (new) A mail opener as claimed in claim 26, wherein the postage meter includes signal generation means operative to generate a signal in response to the print head moving to the operative position, and the electrical circuit of the drive means is responsive to the generated sign.
